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AUTHOR	Hoke, Fred; Jobe, Max E.
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ABSTRACT

American industry, absorbing change at an accelerating rate and therefore changing rapidly in its manpower needs, is supplied by educational institutions largely blind to the need for change, since educators have not used long-term manpower forecasts as guides in continuing curriculum revision. Two kinds of advisory councils are: one whose duty is to review the total system-wide curriculum, facilities, and local manpower needs; or a second, of more limited function, composed of business and industrial men and women familiar with job requirements and able to update curriculum in vocational areas to assure entry-level job skills for students. Objectives and priorities for a council should be clearly defined by the local board of education. Membership should reflect the occupational possibilities in the community and members should be selected from those who have demonstrated an interest in education and the ability to organize and direct volunteer groups. After an initial goal-setting meeting the council must determine its own organization, subcommittee assignments, subcommittee operation, coordination of activities, and relationship with the board of education and staff. The initiative of the chairman is crucial to the effectiveness of the council. (SA)

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CAREER EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCILS:

A PLAN FOR DEVELOPMENT

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Fred Hoke, Executive Director
West Virginia State Advisory
Council on Vocational and
Technical Education

Max E. Jobe, Executive Director
Maryland State Advisory
Council on Vocational and
Technical Education

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CAREER EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCILS: A PLAN FOR DEVELOPMENT

To date educators have found limited use for manpower projections. They have not utilized these long-term forecasts as guides in continuing curriculum revision and recruitment. There are technical and mechanical difficulties involved in developing useful manpower projections. Some of these difficulties are in the ability to get accurate employment figures and in developing a matrix for projecting employment needs. The cost of developing such a program is often prohibitive and the expertise difficult to find. There seems to be no better answer than to develop a direct, almost daily, involvement with business and industry in practically all phases of our educational enterprise.

In his book, Man Education and Manpower, Dr. Grant Venn states, "There is a great need for strengthening the business-employer-school partnership at the local level. Basic education can best be promoted through joint efforts between the local school and the employer. We must develop a plan which provides continuing education for adults in basic education programs and which is responsive to changing conditions, individual needs, and the needs of the labor market."

Unfortunately, the American education establishment keeps insulated from change. Our institutions are, for the most part, deliberately exempt from any market discipline. So, American industry, itself absorbing change at an accelerating rate and therefore changing rapidly in its manpower needs, is supplied by a set of institutions largely blind to the need for change.

It is time that we face the education issue squarely. We can no longer ponder the grim statistics that indicate a necessary educational change without making a whole-hearted effort to bring our educational system into direct involvement in a changing society and economy.

A major problem confronting school districts is the absence of community support. Across the nation, superintendents and school boards are experiencing community apathy and, in many cases, open hostility to the increasing needs for community involvement and, in particular, financial support.

The traditional responsibility of a superintendent must be enlarged to include direct responsiveness to the community. Instead of trying to speak to the entire community on school issues and problems, the superintendent should consider forming a career education citizens advisory group which represents as many neighborhoods and interests as possible. By using an advisory group, the superintendent develops

the potential to become increasingly aware of community ideas and to become more responsive to them.

Community involvement needs to be an on-going, dynamic process of listening to the community to find out what people think and, in many cases, helping to educate the community concerning public school education -- its programs and problems. The more individuals that are involved and committed to a goal, the greater are its chances for success; and the more individuals that are involved in the planning stage, the more the goal becomes a solidified concept capable of being achieved.

With the emergence of larger allotments of federal aid to education, there has been included in these bills a provision for advisory councils to provide inputs to programs to insure that the affected population will have the best possible education for their money. Citizens groups, or advisory councils, have long been recognized as a fairly effective management tool. They not only provide for a more positive community attitude toward programs but also furnish a system of checks and balances to insure that staff members responsible for the programs offer the types of services called for in the program guidelines. It is not the purpose of an advisory council to agree on all issues but rather, through their deliberations, to arrive at a common ground acceptable to a majority of their members.

With the passage of the 1968 Vocational Educational Amendments, states desiring to receive financial assistance through these amendments must establish a state advisory council for vocational and technical education. The purpose of the council is to advise the state boards of education concerning the administration of the state plan for vocational education and to evaluate vocational education programs, services, and activities under this title. The council also must submit an annual evaluation report concerning the status of vocational education in their particular state through the state board to the Commissioner and to the National Advisory Council. Since 1968 through long, slow, deliberate involvement, state advisory councils have become a potent force in the development and subsequent improvement of vocational education in the United States and in many states have expanded the responsibility of these councils to encompass all of career education.

Since it is both undesirable and unrealistic to expect a state-level agency to dictate local educational policies or programs, it becomes imperative that local educational agencies consider the development of career education advisory councils to insure that programs and facilities are designed to meet discovered needs. Although professional educational administrators are hired to give leadership in curriculum development and program inplementation, today's administrators in many cases have such a multitude of demands on their time that it is difficult always to listen to the citizens in their communities about their educational priorities and objec-

tives. Advisory councils can aid in establishing an essential line of communication between administration and community. One of the greatest sources of strength to a superintendent and his board of education can be an efficiently-operated career education advisory council. It is imperative, though, that there be a total commitment on the part of the board of education and on the part of the superintendent to establish the career education advisory council and constructively respond to their recommendations and criticisms. If these commitments are made and the citizens of a community are aware of the importance of this career education advisory council to the community's educational programs, it will not be difficult to attract top business-industry-educational representatives and lay citizens to the council. Without such a commitment, however, the council will become inoperative, a frustration to those people who were selected to serve, and a negative force working against the board of education and superintendent.

If boards of education and superintendents are thoroughly committed to providing the best opportunities for students, then a career education advisory council may be considered as one of the strongest and most positive forces working to strengthen and support educational progress.

There are two kinds of effective local advisory councils. One type is a career education advisory council whose duty is to review the total system-wide school curriculum, facilities, local manpower needs, job placement, and so on. If this council is formed as a result of a total commitment from the board of education and the superintendent it should provide the necessary incentive to obtain representation from all facets of the community. The other type of local council serves a more limited function and may be simply a vocational advisory council composed of business and industrial men and women who are familiar with job requirements. This group of council members up-dates curriculum in each of the vocational areas to assure level-entry job skills for students. In addition to strengthening vocational programs, they may perform vital placement services.

Prior to soliciting members to serve on either of these councils, the board of education and superintendent should have clearly-defined objectives for the advisory council. For example: (1) materials location and development for career education programs, (2) the placement rate for the vocational programs, (3) local manpower needs, (4) certification requirements for vocational educators, (5) identification of job clusters for career studies, (6) providing resource personnel for career awareness programs. It may be that no member of the advisory council considers himself qualified to make judgements in any of these areas, but the true strength of a council is that they will find resource people in the community who would gladly help them compile information in these areas. As these data are

compiled and as judgements are made by the council members, recommendations may be made to the superintendent and to the board of education outlining specific areas where the total educational-vocational program can be strengthened or modified.

It is imperative that the board of education outline its initial priorities in such a way that the advisory council can continually evaluate its own progress and identify new areas of investigation as the original priorities of the board of education have been achieved. The local advisory council must be an ongoing organization with the built-in ability to evaluate, modify, or change directions as they see fit.

IF the superintendent and the board of education are honestly committed to listening to and to acting on advisory council recommendations--
IF the selection of advisory council members is thoughtfully and objectively done--
IF the commission to these members is adequate and clear--
THEN there is no reason why career education in that particular area will not become a significant educational program characterized by:

a high job placement rate,
low dropout rates, and
a relevant curriculum for boys and girls who are aware of the potential inherent in a "career" oriented education.

A well-functioning council will be one of the greatest assets available to a superintendent and a board of education.

ESTABLISHMENT

A career education council must be born out of a recognized need on the part of the superintendent and the board of education. Regardless of who initiates action to form a career education council, both the superintendent and the board of education must be involved in its establishment.

The superintendent and his staff must present the purpose and goals of the council to the board of education. Together, the superintendent and school board members can decide on the membership categories and determine how the selection of members is to be made.

PURPOSE

Although the specific purpose of a local career education council will vary from one school district to another, the general purpose will remain to provide the board of education with advice in establishing policies, programs, and activities related to career education.

MEMBERSHIP

Although the purpose of the advisory council will determine who serves on it, if the council is to advise the board of education in the design and implementation of the career education programs, then the membership must represent a cross section of the occupational areas of the community. This representation will include members from all major groups representing segments of the working community. For example, if the larger employers in the area are the federal government, a steel plant, and trucking industries, then council representation need include these industries.

Council representation also needs to reflect the types of jobs in the community. If a community is highly industrialized, the council membership need reflect the industrial skill areas. If the community has a large contingent of service workers, the council must include representation from this industry. If there are major labor organizations in the community, they need be represented on the council. Major employer groups such as the retail merchants' associations and Chamber of Commerce are to be included and consideration must be given to representation from such groups as farm organizations, student groups, women's organizations, etc.

SIZE OF THE COUNCIL

The size of the council may vary from ten to twenty-five members but a membership of fifteen provides a good working number. As will be explained later, the council membership may be expanded by using subcommittees which include individuals that are not actually council members.

SELECTION OF MEMBERS

Since the size of the council will be relatively small, care should be taken to select persons who have demonstrated an interest in education and who have the ability to organize and direct volunteer groups in productive activities. The membership needs to include community leaders and top executives from the firms and organizations they represent. Persons sought for membership on the council not only are spokesmen for their company or organization but also should be able to speak for the community and influence community action. The formal nomination of individuals for membership on the council is appropriately made by the board members although they may direct the superintendent to present a list of nominees to fill

the previously determined categories to be represented.

NOTIFICATION OF MEMBERSHIP

The superintendent must notify the council members of their appointment by the board of education to serve on the advisory council. Notification need be by letter from the superintendent and include a statement concerning the purpose of the council. After those selected individuals have had time to consider their appointment the superintendent or his designee need contact each to determine if they are willing to serve in this capacity.

The superintendent will establish a meeting date and bring together those people who wish to serve with members of the board of education, superintendent, and key members of his staff. The agenda for the initial meeting need include an explanation of the purpose of the council, suggested goals for the council, and the selection of a chairman and other officers as desired by the council membership. The superintendent and his staff will provide the above information and conduct the meeting until a chairman is selected. Before the meeting concludes council members must have an opportunity to discuss their goals, establish procedural rules, and set dates for subsequent meetings. The chairman may designate members to begin preparing reports on specific issues to be presented at the next meeting.

GENERAL ORGANIZATION

The council itself must determine how the organization can best accomplish the established goals. If the council is small, it may choose to operate as a committee-of-the-whole when dealing with reports and studies directed to the board of education. However, the collection of data and writing of the draft reports will require individual assignments. As an illustration, one of the goals of the council may be to establish vocational education opportunities at the secondary level which reflect the manpower and educational needs of the community as well as the desires of the students. This goal requires a manpower study to forecast types of jobs and numbers of employees which will be needed and a student survey to determine what career information and job preparation students would like provided for them. These task assignments are most logically accomplished by small committees or individuals.

SUBCOMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

If the council chooses to work directly at the curriculum level to advise the staff in occupational areas, it may choose to do this most efficiently through subcommittees which provide good opportunities to involve large numbers of citizens in the work of the council.

One method of approaching their problem is the cluster method. The school system already may have grouped similar occupations into clusters. The number of clusters may vary from five or six to fifteen but the council may organize a subcommittee for each cluster to advise the board of education on matters pertaining to that cluster. These subcommittees may have a membership of approximately five with a chairman who is a member of the council. The chairman of each committee need request the superintendent to assign one of his staff members to work with the committee at the pleasure of that committee. Persons selected to serve on these committees best be chosen because of their knowledge of and involvement in the occupations represented in that particular cluster.

SUBCOMMITTEE OPERATION

The chairman of a subcommittee must assume the leadership role for his group. The subcommittee will be assigned specific responsibilities by the council but it must determine its own method of operation. A subcommittee on agriculture and natural resources, for example, may be charged to provide the board of education and staff with recommendations relevant to the quantity and types of program needs. They also may be charged to assist in developing the curriculum, selecting activities. providing resource personnel, and specifying equipment for agricultural programs. The manner in which these charges are actually accomplished, however, must be the prerogative of that subcommittee.

The subcommittee should establish specific objectives which incorporate the functions assigned to it by the council. To accomplish these objectives a subcommittee may have to include such as an annual or semi-annual evaluation of each program within its assigned cluster or it may become involved with independent manpower studies and other projects.

The subcommittee need submit interim and annual reports to the advisory council and board of education staff. The subcommittee also needs to provide the staff member assigned to the committee by the board of education with continuous feedback from the committee. The annual report will summarize the subcommittee's activities and findings and present recommendations for action.

COORDINATION OF COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

Coordination is critical to the successful performance of the duties of the council and its subcommittees. This function may be performed by the chairman of the council, if he has the time, ability, and resources. This is the preferred organization when the chairman is knowledgeable concerning education and when he can devote many hours per week to the affairs of the council.

Another approach to coordination is a full-time coordinator employed by the Chamber of Commerce, merchants' association, or other community group. This person devotes full time to the career education advisory council as an administrator and provides liason with the board of education and staff.

The third method, and the one most often used, is for the board of education to assign a staff member to the coordinating responsibilities for the council. If this method is used, the chairman, as the community representative, should remain in the dominant role and direct the coordinator's activities.

Regardless of the administrative approach taken to provide a coordinating function for the council, the specific functions remain the same. The coordinator must respond to the council by securing data for council and committee activities and work closely with the council and committee chairman in setting meetings, developing meeting agenda, and contacting members. The coordinator also will be involved in establishing goals and following through on council projects and reports.

RELATIONSHIP WITH BOARD OF EDUCATION AND STAFF

The career education advisory council must establish a formal understanding with the board of education as to the specific types of assistance the board will furnish. There also needs to be an understanding of the types of reports required for the board and staff and the method of making these reports.

The advisory council ought to request the board of education assign one of its members as the board's representative for career education and designate a staff member as a liason between the board and the council. Members of the board of education or school staff may not serve as a member of the council but rather as a council resource. The primary purpose of the staff member is to provide the council with technical assistance and accurate up-to-date information concerning career education in the school district. The staff member is not expected to speak for the board of education or serve as a reactor to the council's deliberations and studies, but is to respond to the needs of the council.

The council should submit all reports in writing to the board of education

through the superintendent followed by a meeting with the board to discuss the report. The committees of the council must work closely with the staff member assigned and exchange ideas and information with this person on a continuing basis. Reports by those committees should be submitted to the council which in turn will incorporate them into a council report to be made to the board of education.

SUMMARY

The effectiveness of the career education council is largely dependent upon the initiative of the chairman of the council and his ability to lead the council. However, the role of the coordinator, whether this be done by the chairman, a full-time employee of a community group, or a school staff member, is just as critical as the chairman's. His initiative in collecting reports, compiling data, taking care of the details in arranging meetings, and following through on council acitivities is most important.

The ability of the council to utilize the resources of the board of education and staff and yet be independent enough to be completely objective in all of the activities and reports is imperative.

Finally, the advisory council approach to improving educational opportunities boils down to four major items:

1. The key to effectiveness of the career education advisory council lies with the superintendent and his sincere efforts in having a council that is involved in meaningful activities.
2. Another important factor is the selection of council members that are both influential and concerned citizens of the community.
3. The council chairman's ability to lead the council in identifying goals and developing strategies for accomplishing these goals is of critical importance.
4. Developing the proper relationship with the board of education and school staff is crucial and must be determined at the outset.

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